



foundation  
for advancement  
in conservation

**Protecting Cultural  
Heritage**

# **AIC Equity & Inclusion Committee's Guiding Principles, Working Agreement, and Non-negotiables**

## **About The Guidelines:**

EIC strives to foster an open and welcoming environment at all times. The purpose of this document is to facilitate the creation of an environment that centers people and respects all voices. This document serves as a guide to help remind us of our guiding principles and our working agreement, which consists of mechanisms by which we can actively practice our overarching principles. This is a working document, and we acknowledge that not everyone feels safe under the same conditions. We will continue to revise the document as we work towards making EIC spaces feel as safe as possible while fostering honesty, openness, and challenging discussions.

EIC members crafted this document together, and we agree to always try our best to abide by it. Despite our best intentions, there will inevitably be times in our conversations that we react poorly, defensively, or inconsiderately. At these times we will refer back to our guidelines to help us refocus and be mindful of our blindspots. We will promote these guidelines in all EIC venues, including internal EIC committee meetings, open EIC Meet & Greets, the Equity and Inclusion in Conservation Higher Logic platform, and in all programming that we organize.

As an act of self-care, this document also lists “non-negotiables,” which are harmful behaviors that we have given ourselves permission to not engage in. EIC reserves the right to remove individuals who cause repeated harm or who harass participants from any EIC space. If someone feels to have been wrongly removed from an EIC space, they may contact [eic@culturalheritage.org](mailto:eic@culturalheritage.org) with their complaint, at which point the matter will be mediated by an EIC representative and AIC staff.

At our core, EIC members recognize that there are existing power structures that inequitably privilege certain groups of people, which arise out of racism, sexism, classism, colonialism, homophobia, and ableism. We recognize that conservation has perpetuated and been built upon these disparities in power and narrative, in effect demolishing the reality that cultural heritage is made by people and for people. We are committed to doing our part to address these structural inequities. We are also committed to actively promoting diversity at all levels within the conservation and cultural heritage communities. We will support and uplift the voices of BIPOC,

LGBTQIA+, and differently abled voices within our community. We hope this document can act as a model for others working to promote antiracism, equity, and thoughtful yet challenging dialogue in conservation.

## **Guiding Principles:**

- Be open and curious
- Work towards transparency & accountability
- Center people
- Practice intention and thoughtfulness
- Be present
- Acknowledge conservation's colonial history, existing power structures, and inequitable privilege
- Recognize your own privilege

## **Working Agreement:**

(Mechanisms for how we do our work)

We will practice intention and thoughtfulness by:

- Teaching, not preaching
- Remembering that it is okay to be in the "editing phase" when communicating
- Creating space for learning and failure
- Assuming best intent, but attending to impact
- Checking our assumptions
- Acknowledging when we are uncomfortable
- Speaking personally
- Staying on topic
- Calling people by their correct name/pronoun
- Acknowledging when you have made a mistake and then apologizing (Oops/ouch)

We will cultivate an open and curious environment by:

- Being open to change
- Making space, taking space
- Honoring new voices
- Allowing others to finish and sharing "airtime"
- Practicing active listening and being present
- Remembering that feedback is an offering
- Asking questions
- Honoring each person's right to pass
- Respecting all confidentiality and anonymity (stories stay, lessons go)

We will center people by:

- Speaking out against injustice
- Advocating for marginalized people
- Remembering that cultural heritage is made by and for people
- Practicing self-care and taking breaks
- Checking in with ourselves and with others
- Treating each other with courtesy and respect
- Celebrating each other's differences

## **Non-Negotiables:**

- Racist and offensive language, targeted attacks, and name-calling (in person, via emails, on the higher logic forums, or on social media platforms)
- Racism deniers, gas-lighting, claims of “reverse racism”, and “what-aboutisms”
- Overstepping boundaries (i.e. excessive communication, repeated breaches of respect, and failing to recognize stated needs)
- Re-traumatizing environments and events
  - Situations where people are called on to reenact their trauma in service of “teachable” moments
  - Expectations that people have to provide personal experiences to prove inequitable or discriminatory practices/behavior
  - Pressuring marginalized people for data to back up personal experiences that they have shared

## **Related Documents and Resources:**

[AIC Equity and Inclusion Committee Charge](#)

[EIC 2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#)

[RWG Communication and Decision-making Guidelines](#)

(Re)conciliation Working Group of the Canadian Association for the Conservation of Cultural Property

[General Resources, Learn about safe spaces](#)

Safe Space Alliance

[Safer Space Policy/Community Agreements](#)

The Anti-Oppression Network

This document was inspired by and adapted from content in Dina Bailey's (Mountain Top Vision) 2021 Okinawa Institute for Science & Technology DEIA in Conservation workshop and Dr. Brea Heidelberg's (ISO Arts Consulting) 2019 EIC Strategic Planning Session.